

THE OXFORDSHIRE Tragedy: OR, The VIRGIN'S ADVICE.

PART I.

YOUNG virgins fair, of beauty bright,
And you that are of Cupid's fold;
Unto my tragedy give ear,
For it's as true as e'er was told.
In Oxfordshire a lady fair,
The daughter of a worthy knight,
A gentleman that lived near
Was enamour'd with her beauty bright.
Rosanna was this maiden's name,
The flower of fair Oxfordshire;
This gentleman a-courting came,
Begging of her to be his dear.
Her kind heart to love inclin'd,
Young Cupid bending of his bow,
And left a fatal dart behind
That prov'd her fatal overthrow.
Within a pleasant grove they walk'd,
And valleys where the lambs do play;
Sweet pleasant tales of love they talk'd,
For to pass the long summer's day.
My charming sweet rose, said he,
See how the pleasant flowers spring;
The pretty birds on ev'ry tree,
With melody the groves did ring.
I nothing have to please or delight
My soul, but those charms of thine;
Our hearts are fix'd, therefore, my dear,
Like turtles let us both combine.
Let me embrace my heart's delight
Within this pleasant bower here:
This bank of violets for my bed,
Shaded with those roses fair.
She said, What do you mean, I pray?
I am a noble lady born.
What signifies my beauty bright,
When my honour it is gone?
My parents they will me disdain,
And young virgins me deride;
Oh! do not prove my overthrow,
If you love stay 'till I am your bride.
Sweet angel dear, I do vow,
By all the powers so divine,
You are the whom I adore,
And in love my heart confine.

And if thou dost me refuse,
This sword must soon end my woe.
Then from her arms he straitway flew,
And in a passion his sword drew.
Her hands as white as lillies fair,
Most dreadfully she did wring;
She said, My death's approaching near:
Should I relieve and succour him
It brings on my sad fall,
'Tis I that must receive the wound.
The crimson die forsook her cheeks,
At his feet she dropped on the ground.
This innocent he did betray,
Full sore against her chaste desire.
True love is a celestial flame,
But flames of lust a raging fire.
But when her senses did revive,
He many vows and oaths did make,
That he'd for ever true remain,
And not her company forsake.

PART II.

NOW, virgins, to the second part,
Observe this sweet creature's end;
When once your virtue it is gone,
You've nothing you to recommend.
After the traitor had his will
He never did come near her more.
Then from her eyes both night and day
The crystal tears did pour.
In the silent grove she then
Did wander quite alone;
And for the creature she had lost,
In the bower thus would mourn:
Oh! that I was some little bird,
That I might fly to hide my shame;
Oh, foolish maid! thus to believe
The base delusion of a man.
The harmless lamb could sport and play,
The turtle constant to his mate;
Nothing more wretched is than I,
To love the man that doth me hate:
I will to him a letter send,
Rememb'ring of the vows he made
Within that shady bower, where
My tender heart he first betray'd.

Her trembling hands a letter wrote,
My dearest dear, what must I do?
Alas! what mischief have I done,
That I am slighted so by you?
I have slighted many lords of fame,
Who little know my misery;
I did forsake a worthy knight,
And all for the sake of thee.
And now my little infant dear
Will quickly spread abroad my shame.
One word of comfort send to me
Ere by thy cruelty I am slain.
This answer to her he did send,
Your insolence amazes me,
To think that I should marry one,
With whom before I had been free.
Indeed I'll not the father be
Unto the bastard that you bear;
I take no farther thoughts on me;
No more from you pray let me hear.
When she this letter did receive
She wrung her hands, and wept full sore.
Yet every day she still would range
To lament within that bower.
This faithless wretch began to think
How noble were her parents dear;
He said, I sure shall punish'd be,
When they the story come to hear.
So then the Devil did begin
To enter in his wretched mind:
Her precious life he then must have.
Then how to act the thing did find,
He many times did watch her out
Unto the pleasant bower, where
One day he did in private go,
When he knew she was not there.
And privately he dug her grave
Underneath an oaken tree;
Then in the branches he did hide,
To act this bloody tragedy.
Poor harmless soul! she nothing knew
But as usual she went there;
And on a bank of violets she
In a mournful manner did sit down.
Of his unkindness did complain:
You gentle gods so kind, said she,
Did you this grave for me prepare?
He then descended from the tree.
As she the grave did espy,
She then arose to view the same;
She little thought her lover there;
He said, Strumpet, thy death is near.
Oh! welcome, welcome, she reply'd,
As long as by that hand I die.
This is a pleasant marriage-bed,
I'm ready: Use your cruelty.

But may the Heavens bring to light
This crime, and let it thus appear:
Winter or summer on this grave
May this rose in its bloom appear,
Never to wither, tho' it's cropt,
But when thy hand doth touch the same,
Then may the bloom that moment cease,
To bring thy crime unto shame.
More she'd have said, but with his sword
He pierc'd her body thro',
Then throw'd her in the silent grave,
Saying, Now there's an end of you.
He filled up the grave again,
With weeds the same did overspread,
Then unconcern'd he strait went home,
And instantly he went to-bed.
Her parents were grieved sore,
For the loss of their daughter dear.
Thinking that she was stole away,
Who was to their riches heir.
Twelve months ago this was done,
There's thousands of the truth do know.
According as she did desire,
On her grave the damask-rose did grow.
And many wonder'd at the same,
For all the winter it did spring.
If any one did crop the rose,
In a moment it would grow again.
This thing was told the country o'er,
And many came the sight to see;
This miracle from Heaven shewn.
Among the rest he must curious be,
To go and see if it was true.
And when unto the place he came,
The beauteous rose he saw in bloom,
And eagerly he cropt the same.
The leaves faded from off the bush.
The rose within his hand did die.
He said, It is Rosanna's blood,
Which springs up from her fair body.
Many people that were there,
Took notice of what he did say,
And said, He had a murder done.
So the truth he told without delay.
They dug, and found the body there,
The first of June, it is well known,
Before a magistrate he went,
And in a prison he doth mourn,
'Till he punishment receives.
No doubt but he will have his due.
Young men, by this a warning take,
Keep your vows whate'er you do.
For God doth find out many ways
Such heinous crimes to bring to light;
For murder is a crying sin,
And hateful in his blessed sight.